



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

DIRK KEMPTHORNE – Governor
KARL B. KURTZ – Director

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
450 West State Street, 10th Floor
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0036
PHONE 208-334-5625
FAX 208-334-5926

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 20, 2006

Tom Shanahan
(208) 334-0668

FISH ADVISORY ISSUED FOR AMERICAN FALLS RESERVOIR

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare is issuing a fish consumption advisory for American Falls Reservoir for pregnant women and children due to mercury levels found in small mouth bass, trout, Utah suckers, and Utah chubs. The levels of mercury in fish in the eastern Idaho reservoir are not high enough to pose a health threat for the general public, but could affect unborn or small children.

“Due to the possibility that a child’s health could be affected by exposure to mercury in the womb, through breastfeeding or by eating fish, we have issued the advisory with specific recommendations,” says Chris Corwin, of the Fish Advisory Program for the Division of Health. These include:

Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning to become pregnant should limit the fish they eat from American Falls Reservoir to no more than:

- 3 six-ounce meals per month of smallmouth bass and Utah sucker, or
- 6 six-ounce meals per month of Utah chub, or
- 8 six-ounce meals per month of trout.

Children under the age of seven should not eat more than:

- 1 four-ounce meal per month of smallmouth bass and Utah sucker, or
- 2 four-ounce meals per month of Utah chub, or
- 4 four-ounce meals per month of trout.

Mercury occurs naturally in the environment and can accumulate in the flesh of fish. By eating fish, people can absorb mercury which can affect their central nervous system. For most people, mercury from eating fish is not harmful. But special care is taken with unborn and small children, whose central nervous systems are growing and maturing.

(more)

Mercury is found in all salt and freshwater fish. Corwin advises young children and women who are nursing, pregnant, or wanting to become pregnant to avoid eating other fish (store bought or from restaurants) if they have eaten the maximum amounts listed above.

“If a pregnant woman is going to eat three meals of small mouth bass over a month, she should not eat any other fish during that same month,” he says. “Some fish contain very high levels of mercury and should be completely avoided by pregnant women and children.” These include shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish because they contain very high amounts of mercury.

Overall, Corwin says fish are an excellent nutritional food source and vital to many people’s diets. “Fishing is one of the benefits of living in Idaho,” he says. “We encourage people to eat fish, but advise them to follow these precautions to avoid any health problems for unborn and small children.”

The Idaho Fish Consumption Advisory Program addresses contamination in fish statewide that may impact human health. For more information, call toll-free 1-866-240-3553.

	Pregnant or Breastfeeding Women, Women Planning to be Pregnant	Children Under 7 Years of Age	General Public
Smallmouth Bass	Limit fish consumption to no more than 3 meals per month	Limit fish consumption to no more than 1 meal per month	No Consumption Advisory
Utah Sucker	Limit fish consumption to no more than 3 meals per month	Limit fish consumption to no more than 1 meal per month	No Consumption Advisory
Utah Chub	Limit fish consumption to no more than 6 meals per month	Limit fish consumption to no more than 2 meals per month	No Consumption Advisory
Trout (Rainbow and Yellowstone Cutthroat)	Limit fish consumption to no more than 8 meals per month	Limit fish consumption to no more than 4 meals per month	No Consumption Advisory

Meal = 6 ounces of uncooked fish for men, women and children above the age of 7 and 4 ounces of uncooked fish for children under the age of 7.

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(News Editors: For more information, contact Chris Corwin, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, 208-334-5508.)